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News Release

Safety is No Accident

Injuries are leading cause of death for Utahns ages 1-44

(Salt Lake City, UT) – In 2009, more than 1,500 Utahns – or 30 people every week – died from injuries. Each year, treating injuries costs Utahns an average of \$486 million dollars in hospital and emergency department (ED) charges. Injuries are the leading cause of death for Utahns ages 1-44, with poisonings, firearms, and motor vehicle crashes the leading methods.

“Injuries continue to place an enormous burden on our state,” said Trisha Keller, Program Manager for the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “Adults and children deserve to live, work, and play safely where they can enjoy every aspect of their lives without worry about violence or injury. Injuries are not an act of fate,” she added.

In fact, research shows that most injuries are predictable and preventable.

Policy and legislation are often used as tools to help prevent injuries. During the 2011 Legislative Session, several bills were passed that address violence and injury, including:

- **HB 241 Clean Out the Cabinets Month Designation.** This law designates the month of April as Clean Out the Medicine Cabinet Month in Utah. In 2009, 265 Utahns died of non-illicit drug overdose deaths. Since 2000, the number of deaths in Utah due to overdose of prescription pain medication has increased more than 400%.
- **SB 61 Education for Prescribing Controlled Substances.** This law requires a prescriber applying for a new or renewed controlled substance license to take four hours of controlled substance prescribing classes each licensing period. A statewide survey in 2008 found that the majority of Utahns who were prescribed pain medications had leftovers and kept them.

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- **HB 374 Domestic Violence Amendments.** This law prevents a person arrested for domestic violence from personally contacting the alleged victim while the accused is detained in a jail. There is an average of one domestic violence-related homicide each month in Utah.
- **SB 304 Bullying Amendments.** This law prohibits students and school employees from engaging in: bullying; cyber-bullying; harassment; hazing; retaliation; and making false claims regarding the aforementioned conduct. It also requires schools, local school districts, and the State Board of Education to implement anti-bullying and hazing policies and to conduct staff trainings.
- **HB 204 Protection of Athletes with Head Injuries.** This law requires amateur sports organizations to adopt and enforce a concussion and head injury policy and requires the removal of a child from a sporting event when the child is suspected of having a concussion or traumatic head injury until that child receives written medical clearance from a qualified health care provider. In 2008, 694 ED visits were for head injuries as a result of organized or recreational sports activities for all ages. Of these, 429 (62%) resulted in a diagnosis of a concussion.
- **HB 68 Off-highway Vehicle Operator Responsibilities.** This law states that off-highway vehicle (OHV) operators who are 18 years of age or older must act responsibly so that injury to themselves or other persons or property is avoided. From 2005-2009, an annual average of 4,000 Utahns visited the ED or were hospitalized due to injuries and 12 were killed while riding OHVs/ATVs.
- **SB 124 Leaving a Child Unattended in a Motor Vehicle.** This law makes it a class C misdemeanor for a person who is responsible for a child under nine years of age to intentionally, recklessly, knowingly, or with criminal negligence leave a child in an enclosed compartment of a motor vehicle. An average of 38 children died each year in the U.S. from heatstroke after being left unattended in cars.

During National Public Health Week, April 4-10, 2011, public health and safety officials will encourage Utahns to remember that “safety is NO accident.” Information on how Utahns can get involved in National Public Health Week can be found at <http://www.nphw.org/nphw11/first1.htm#>.

For additional data and resources about injuries and violence in Utah visit <http://health.utah.gov/vipp>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.